Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for soft-programming an electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, comprising:

performing a first soft-programming with a first soft-programming multiplicity in given operating conditions, the first soft-programming multiplicity corresponding to simultaneous soft programming of a first plurality of memory cells of the memory device; and

performing a second soft programming with a second soft-programming multiplicity differing from the first soft-programming multiplicity in the a case where said given operating conditions are not present, the second soft-programming multiplicity corresponding to simultaneous soft programming of a second plurality of memory cells of the memory device.

2.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is greater than the one that used for writing data in the memory device.

3.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is twice the one than that used for writing data in the memory device.

4.   (Original) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is smaller than said first soft-programming multiplicity.

5.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is equal to ~~the one~~that used for writing data in the memory device.

6.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 1 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is used in ~~the~~a case where ~~the~~a current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity meets a given relation.

7.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 6 wherein said relation is defined by ~~the~~a condition that the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity is either smaller or equal to a threshold current.

8.   (Currently Amended) The soft-programming method according to claim 6 wherein said threshold current is equal to ~~the~~a maximum current which is available for ~~the~~ writing operations and which can be generated within the memory device.

9.   (Currently Amended)   An electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, ~~characterized by~~comprising:

first and second pluralities of memory cells; and

soft-programming means for operating with a first soft-programming multiplicity simultaneously on the first plurality of memory cells in given operating conditions and for operating with a second soft-programming multiplicity, simultaneously on the second plurality of memory cells, differing from the first soft-programming multiplicity in ~~the~~a case where said given operating conditions are not present.

10.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is greater than ~~the one~~that used for writing data in the memory device.

11.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is twice ~~the one~~that used for writing data in the memory device.

12.   (Original) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is smaller than said first soft-programming multiplicity.

13.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said second soft-programming multiplicity is equal to ~~the one~~that used for writing data in the memory device.

14.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 9 wherein said first soft-programming multiplicity is used in ~~the~~a case where ~~the~~a current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity meets a given relation.

15.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 14 wherein said relation is defined by ~~the~~a condition that the current absorbed during soft-programming carried out with said first soft-programming multiplicity is smaller or equal to a threshold current.

16.   (Currently Amended) The memory device according to claim 14 wherein said threshold current is equal to ~~the~~a maximum current which is available for ~~the~~writing operations and which can be generated within the memory device.

17.   (Cancelled)

18.   (Currently Amended) A method for soft-programming an electrically erasable nonvolatile memory device, comprising:

performing a first soft-programming of a first plurality of memory cells simultaneously; ~~and~~

performing a second soft-programming of a second plurality of memory cells simultaneously that is fewer than the first plurality of memory cells if ~~the~~ a current drawn during the first soft programming is equal to or greater than a threshold amount; and

performing a third soft-programming of a third plurality of memory cells simultaneously that is equal in number to the first plurality of memory cells if the current drawn during the first soft programming is less than the threshold amount.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the first plurality is 32 bits that are soft-programmed simultaneously and the second plurality is 16 bits that are soft programmed simultaneously.

20.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the threshold amount of current is ~~the~~ a maximum current ~~the circuit~~ that can be generated during a programming ~~step~~ operation.

21.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the first plurality that are soft-programmed simultaneously is double ~~the~~ a number bits that ~~the programming system has the~~ is allowed by power capability of programming during a normal program ~~step~~ operation.